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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 DUBLIN 000089

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DHS FOR OFFICE OF FIELD OPERATIONS, JAYSON AHERN, ASSISTANT  
COMMISSIONER

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TAGS: [EAIR](#) [DHS](#) [ECON](#) [APER](#) [AMGT](#) [EI](#)  
SUBJECT: CBP, DUBLIN AIRPORT AUTHORITY DISAGREE ON  
PRE-INSPECTION NEEDS

REF: A. 05 DUBLIN 606  
[1](#)B. YOUNG-BYERLY/WALKLET E-MAIL OF 12/15/05

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) have reached an apparent impasse on whether CBP facility expansion or additional CBP staff would resolve congestion problems with CBP pre-inspection operations at Dublin and Shannon Airports. In a January 19 meeting in Dublin with the Ambassador, the DAA, and affected carriers, CBP officials observed that facilities at Irish airports for pre-inspection (passport/immigration screening vs. full "pre-clearance" with customs and agricultural checks) were insufficient to meet CBP needs. Carriers, representatives added that CBP's inability to pre-inspect all U.S.-bound flights had created competition issues and affected marketing for their service. DAA officials replied that whereas the second Dublin Airport terminal might be able to accommodate full CBP pre-clearance by 2009, the solution to short-term pre-inspection problems was to add CBP personnel. CBP officials responded that CBP staff could not be added so long as Irish airports offered facilities only for pre-inspection, not full pre-clearance, especially given the costs associated with overseas CBP assignments. The Ambassador called for continued discussion and creative near-term solutions, as impending U.S.-EU Open Skies would likely increase U.S.-Ireland air service and exacerbate constraints on CBP personnel. The DAA's dismissal of CBP's facility needs suggests it may be out of step with Irish Government plans to promote Dublin Airport as an alternative trans-Atlantic gateway in Europe, offering simplified connections to the United States. End summary.

CBP Pre-inspection: Needs and Commercial Value  
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[1](#)2. (U) U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) pre-inspection facilities at Dublin and Shannon Airports are insufficient to meet CBP needs, said Jennifer Sava, Acting CBP Director for Pre-clearance Operations, in a January 19 meeting with the Ambassador, CBP officers, the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA), and representatives of Delta, USAirways, Continental, American Airlines, Aer Lingus, and the Air Transport Association. Sava noted that CBP operations in Dublin and Shannon were one-dimensional, involving only passport/immigration screening (pre-inspection) as opposed to full pre-clearance with agricultural and customs checks. Even this limited service, however, was "maxed out," particularly in Dublin, where a 12-person CBP staff rotated

8-hour shifts among 8 available booths. Sava explained that, in addition to chronic passenger congestion, there was no area to search bags or people, nor was there space to segregate suspected criminals from regular passengers. Glenn Ross, CBP Program Manager for Pre-clearance Operations, added that full pre-clearance would require queuing and screening areas, interview and training rooms, x-ray capability, and means to conduct radiation, explosives, and weapons checks. Sava also observed that the DAA's proposal to provide CBP two additional booths in a separate pier at Dublin Airport was a non-starter, as it would split CBP staff and leave even less personnel in the pier from which most U.S. flights departed.

¶3. (U) U.S. carrier representatives explained that CBP pre-inspection of U.S.-bound flights at Dublin and Shannon, the only airports to offer such screening in the Eastern Hemisphere, was critical in marketing their trans-Atlantic service. They also noted that current constraints on CBP that dictated the pre-inspection of only some, not all, U.S. flights had created a serious competition issue. One representative pointed out that full pre-clearance posed significant commercial advantages for airlines, since it would enable planes serving Ireland-U.S. routes to park at U.S. domestic gates, freeing up international gates for additional trans-Atlantic flights. This possibility could mean more flights passing through Dublin to the United States from points in the Middle East and Asia, and thus more revenue for the DAA. Another representative observed that the U.S. carriers, hub-and-spoke approach precluded DAA proposals to space out U.S.-bound flights to relieve congestion in CBP areas. He noted that a later arrival in the United States for trans-Atlantic flights would prevent passengers from connecting at hub airports to hundreds of domestic flights.

The DAA and CBP: More Personnel vs. More Space

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¶4. (U) Whereas the second Dublin Airport terminal might be able to accommodate full pre-clearance upon opening in 2009 (ref A), the solution to short-term pre-inspection problems was to add CBP personnel to Dublin and Shannon, said Robert Hilliard, Director of the Dublin Airport Authority (which also oversees Shannon Airport). He said that contractors had recently begun to review requirements for the second terminal, and he asked CBP officials to forward proposals on future staffing/space needs for inclusion in that exercise. In the near term, he remarked, the DAA did not see the question of whether U.S. flights were pre- or post-cleared "as having too big an impact" on airport operations. Hilliard added that there was no way to expand physical capacity in the pier where CBP now worked, given the presence of Irish customs and immigration staff in the area. He also rejected proposals to move CBP operations entirely to an existing separate pier, arguing that CBP staff would still be insufficient there. He offered to consider moving CBP into a pier scheduled for construction in 2007, but again attributed congestion problems to CBP staffing shortfalls.

¶5. (U) CBP could not add personnel to Dublin and Shannon so long as those airports offered facilities only for pre-inspection, not full pre-clearance with customs and agricultural checks, responded Sava. She explained that assigning an officer overseas cost CBP three to four times the amount required for a domestic U.S. posting, in view of housing, security, and other Embassy-related expenses. Moreover, there would be no cost-savings from adding pre-inspection staff in Ireland, since CBP would still have to perform customs and agricultural screening for Ireland-origin flights at U.S. gateways. Sava stressed that not having rooms to interview suspect passengers apart from regular travelers was a dangerous violation of CBP standards. She also noted that congestion in the CBP area in Dublin

occasionally led passengers to await their flights sitting in CBP booths, where CBP computer screens were visible. She advised Hilliard to visit the CBP facility at Toronto Airport to view an efficient, fully outfitted pre-clearance operation.

The Ambassador: Prepare for Open Skies  
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¶6. (U) The Ambassador remarked that likely increases in Ireland-U.S. service in the context of both the U.S.-EU Open Skies agreement and the impending phase-out of the Shannon Stop requirement lent urgency to CBP,s problems in Dublin. He called for creative near-term solutions that would allow both sides to enjoy the benefits of Open Skies, rather than await the completion of the second Dublin Airport terminal in ¶2009. An airline representative echoed the Ambassador, saying that the start of the Shannon phase-out this autumn would prompt a rush by other carriers into the attractive Irish market, exacerbating current constraints on CBP staff. The difficulty of adding flights under this scenario, she added, made her airline feel as though it had been given a long-awaited gift with U.S.-Irish Open Skies, only to have no way to unwrap it. DAA Terminal Operations Manager Brendan Daly noted that the DAA had recently allocated a room near the CBP area in Dublin for processing travel documents in order to reduce passenger congestion at gates used for U.S. flights. He said that the DAA would continue to look for ways to help make CBP,s current operations, as currently located, more efficient.

Comment: Mixed Signals on the GOI,s Airport Strategy  
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¶7. (SBU) The DAA,s reluctance to consider CBP,s short-term facility needs suggests some confusion in the Irish Government's strategy to make Dublin Airport an alternative gateway for trans-Atlantic travel. Twice in 2005, Transport Minister Cullen told the Ambassador that the Government hoped to draw international passengers away from London's Heathrow Airport with an upgraded airport in Dublin that simplified connections to Europe and the United States. In fact, Cullen was in Singapore the week of January 16 to discuss prospects for service to Ireland and beyond by Singapore Airlines and Royal Thai Airlines. Moreover, Aer Lingus CEO Dermot Mannion recently told the Ambassador that the DAA had placed ads in Persian Gulf countries touting Dublin Airport, with CBP pre-inspection, as a good transit point to the United States. In these circumstances, one might expect the DAA to go out of its way to accommodate CBP. DAA Director Hilliard's

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seeming dismissal of CBP,s facility needs, however, suggest that the DAA does recognize the significant comparative advantage that CBP offers Ireland as it competes for international air traffic. When DAA Terminal Operations Manager Daly met with the Ambassador this past December, he did not even know that Ireland had the only CBP operation in Europe (ref B). Post aims to foster continued discussion by both sides as Ireland's airport expansion plans unfold.  
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